

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 NSCE-00 AID-05 PA-01
USIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 /067 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 329
INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 05516

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SRREF
SUBJECT: INVOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF LAO REFUGEES TO LAOS

REF: BANGKOK 5056

1. THE CHIEF IMMIGRATION OFFICER IN NAKHON PHANOM
TOLD THE REFUGEE COORDINATOR FEBRUARY 21 THAT OVER
100 LAO HAD BEEN RETURNED TO LAOS FROM THE
PROVINCE SINCE THE INAUGURATION OF THE NOVEMBER 15
EXCLUSIONARY POLICY. (OF THAT TOTAL, AT LEAST 20
ETHNIC CHINESE HAVE SLIPPED BACK INTO THAILAND.)
THE RTG HAS SENT MOST OF THEM BACK IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT, AND HAD LITTLE INFORMATION ON THEIR FATE.
THREE WOMEN--A MOTHER AND HER TWO DAUGHTERS--WHO HAD
BEEN RETURNED THE PREVIOUS WEEK FROM THA UTHEN
DISTRICT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, HOWEVER, WERE SHOT AND
KILLED BY PATHET LAO SOLDIERS UPON ARRIVAL ON THE
LAO BANK OF THE MEKONG. THAI OFFICIALS SAW THE EVENT
TAKE PLACE. THE IMMIGRATION CHIEF BELIEVED THAT, AS
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UNFORTUNATE AS THAT INCIDENT WAS, IT WOULD HELP ALLEVIATE
THE PRESSURE FROM BANGKOK TO STRICTLY CARRY OUT
THE PRESENT POLICY OF FORCED RETURN.

2. THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY OPERATIONS
CENTER AT NAKHON PAHNOM CURRENTLY HOUSES 39 REFUGEES
FROM LAOS, PLUS THREE OF THE 20 CHINESE MENTIONED

ABOVE. THE 39 APPEAR TO BE UNDER NO THREAT OF BEING RETURNED, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE POST NOVEMBER 15 ARRIVALS. FRANCE HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED 11 OF THE 15 VIETNAMESE AMONG THE GROUP, AND TWO OF THE 24 LAO.

3. NAKHON PHANOM GOVERNOR SOMPHON KIINPONGSA NEGOTIATED AN AGREEMENT JANUARY 12 IN MUKDAHAN, JUST ACROSS THE RIVER FROM SAVANNAKHET, WITH SAVANNAKHET DEPUTY GOVERNOR BUNPHAN VIRAKIT. BUNPHAN ASKED THAT THE THAI SUBMIT LISTS OF NAMES OF REFUGEES TO BE RETURNED SO THAT HE COULD DECIDE IN ADVANCE WHETHER TO ACCEPT THEM. LOCAL THAI AUTHORITIES HAD SENT FIVE SUCH LISTS TO SAVANNAKHET AND GOTTON NO REPLY. THEY HAD MEANWHILE HEARD THAT NUMPHAN HAD BEEN SENT TO A "SEMINAR," PROBABLY FOR HAVING ENTERED INTO THE AGREEMENT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

4. LESLIE A. GOODYEAR, THE REGIONAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE, INFORMED US FEBRUARY 23 THAT HE HAD WRITTEN A LETTER TO WINYU ANGKHANARAK, UNDERSECRETARY OF INTERIOR, AND PRESENTED THE LETTER FEBRUARY 21 TO DAMRONG SUNTHONSARATHUN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INTERIOR'S LOCAL ADMINISTRATION. DEPARTMENT. THE LETTER PROTESTED THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO LAOS FROM UBON PROVINCE (REFTEL).
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GOODYEAR SAID THAT VIEWS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE COMMISSION NOTWITHSTANDING (BANGKOK 5046), THE UNHCR HAD ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE THAT SOME REFUGEES MAY NOT BE GENUINE. THERE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE SCREENING PROCEDURES IN WHICH THE UNHCR WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS ITS VIEWS BEFORE SEVERE ACTIONS ARE TAKEN AGAINST THESE INDIVIDUALS. GOODYEAR SAID THAT DAMRONG WAS UPSET THAT THE PROTEST WAS IN WRITING.

5. WE HAVE INFORMED GOODYEAR OF THE NAKHON PHANOM SITUATION, AND WILL CONTINUE FOLLOWING UP WITH MOI OFFICIALS ON THE SUBJECT OF FORCING REFUGEES TO RETURN TO LAOS.
WHITEHOUSE

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